



State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor

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June 2, 2009

The Honorable Robert W. Harrell, Jr.
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Post Office Box 11867
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Dear Mr. Speaker and Members of the House:

I am vetoing and returning without my approval H. 3762, R. 115, which would create special license plates imprinted with the following messages: "Our Farms-Our Future," "South Carolina Wildlife," and "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." This bill also specifies that the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) may only issue "Gold Star Family" license plates to members of the immediate family of United States Armed Forces members killed in action, and waive the fee for this special license plate.

Let me be clear up front that our veto of this legislation is in no way based on the merit of the groups represented by these new license plates; however, we continue to be concerned with the General Assembly's desire to be involved in the license plate creation business. We believe it is more appropriate to allow the DMV to issue license plates through the administrative process that is currently in place and has proven effective. For this very reason, last year we included in a letter that accompanied S. 1050, Act 297 of 2008, a signal that we would be vetoing any more legislation that created new license plates. A copy of that letter is attached to this veto message.

Currently our DMV issues 371 different classifications of license plates – an increase of 19 since this time last year, counting legislatively-mandated tags. Recognizing the growing popularity of special license plates and the need for each group to seek approval in the form of legislation, in 2006, the General Assembly passed legislation (S. 613, Act 398) providing rules that certain nonprofit groups could utilize when seeking approval from the DMV for a new organization license plate. Our primary reason for supporting this legislation was to make it unnecessary to pass legislation every time a group of citizens desired a special license plate. This framework has proven very successful as 23 groups have utilized this process since 2006, with 19 new tags having been approved. Seven new tags have been approved using this process over the last year – demonstrating that the DMV is capable of administering the creation of new license plates.

The Honorable Robert W. Harrell, Jr.

Page Two

June 2, 2009

We believe that the successful framework that was established for nonprofit organizations should apply to all license plate applications. Ultimately we do not believe that these are the types of policies that the people of our state expect the General Assembly to be debating. The following is a sampling of special license plates created by the General Assembly: "In God We Trust," "In Reason We Trust," "Heritage Classic Golf," "First in Golf," "Surfrider Foundation," "S.C. Elks Foundation," "Lions International," "NASCAR-Jeff Gordon," "NASCAR-Rusty Wallace," "No More Homeless Pets," and "Gone Fishing." My point with this list is not to diminish any group or its cause, but to make the point that we do not think the General Assembly needs to be spending its time approving license plates when the DMV can effectively administer this process. We believe the license tag creation process should be streamlined to charge the DMV with approving all license plates, thus allowing the General Assembly to focus on the more pressing issues facing South Carolina. This is particularly the case when the state faces \$20 billion in unfunded political promises, and important issues like reforming the Employment Security Commission, much needed restructuring to state government, and eliminating the corporate income tax to grow and create jobs here in South Carolina, remain unfinished.

In this same batch of ratified bills that we recently reviewed was H. 3134, which, like this bill, also clarifies that only the immediate family of a member of the United States Armed Forces killed in action, may receive "Gold Star Family" license plates. H. 3134 also waives the special fee required by Section 56-3-2020 for individuals receiving this license plate, leaving only the regular motor vehicle license fee to be paid. We have signed H. 3134 into law, thus accomplishing the most of what H. 3762 seeks to accomplish with respect to "Gold Star Family" license plates. We would sign legislation that waives the regular motor vehicle fee if it is sent to us without other new license plates being created.

Again, our concerns with H. 3762 are not with the substantive content of the special license plates created in this legislation, but instead with an unnecessarily complicated process that involves the General Assembly passing legislation designating evermore license plates. Given that the political process has accelerated on designating license plates again, we are going to ask that the General Assembly refrain from passing any more of these bills and instead allow the process to work through the DMV.

For these reasons I am vetoing and returning H. 3762, R-115, to you without my approval.

Sincerely,



Mark Sanford

Attachment